

## Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: AF/E:RBARRETT

APPROVED BY: AF/E:RBARRETT

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 126394 TOSEC 130189

EXDIS

ADDIS 6097 BEING REPEATED TO THE SECRETARY AS REFERENCE  
TO ACTION MEMORANDUM BEING SUBMITTED SEPTTEL.

FOLLOWING REPEAT ADDIS ABABA 6097 ACTION SECSTATE INFO  
ASMARA DTD 20 MAY

QTE

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 6097

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: ERITREA AND THE EPMG

1. THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE GENERALIZATIONS ON BASIS OF CONFLICTING  
REPORTS AND SURMISES ABOUT EPMG INTENTIONS IN ERITREA, AND POSSIBLE  
OUTCOMES.

2. GOVT IS APPARENTLY SERIOUS ABOUT TRYING TO REACH NEGOTIATED AGREE-  
MENT WITH ERITREAN INSURGENTS, BUT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE HAVING SUCCESS

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ONE REPORT FROM EXCELLENT SOURCE SAYS GOVT IS IN INDIRECT TOUCH WITH

PLF MILITARY LEADER ISAIAS AFEWORK. IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT CONTENT OF PUBLICIZED GOVT OFFER (SAME DEGREE OF AUTONOMY AS OTHER PROVINCES) IS SUFFICIENTLY FORTHCOMING TO BE OF SERIOUS INTEREST TO INSURGENTS. HOWEVER, WE CAN HOPE (REGRETFULLY WITHOUT FACTUAL BASIS IN REPORTS) THAT PRIVATE OFFERS TO PLF AND/OR PROCESS OF DIALOGUE WITH PLF MAY PRODUCE BETTER AND MORE FLEXIBLE GOVT POSITION. ON BALANCE WE HAVE TO RATE CHANCES FOR ANY FRUITFUL NEGOTIATIONS AS RATHER LOW.

3. PREPARATIONS FOR MILITARY PUSH IN ERITREA ARE PROCEEDING. PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF RECRUITMENT OF PEASANT VOLUNTEERS, TRANSPORT NORTH, OBSTRUCTION BY PEASANTS ALONG WAY, BLOWN BRIDGES, MEAGER OR NONEXISTENT LOGISTICS AND SUPPLIES, ETC., HAVE TEMPORARILY DELAYED MOVEMENTS AND PERHAPS REDUCED NUMBERS ALTHOUGH SUDANESE ESTIMATES HAVE RISEN FROM 20,000 TO 25,000 IN LAST FEW DAYS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT PREPARATIONS FOR MILITARY PUSH HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY SLOWED TO GIVE TIME FOR TESTING NEGOTIATING TRACK, AND TO KEEP PRESSURE ON INSURGENTS TO OPEN DIALOGUE, BY AVOIDING INDICATIONS OF GOVT REVERSAL OF MILITARY PLANS. IT IS, UNFORTUNATELY, MORE LIKELY THAT SLOWDOWN PRIMARILY DUE TO ENORMOUS LOGISTIC AND ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES.

4. WE HEAR FROM MANY SOURCES THAT MOOD AMONG DIRG MEMBERS IS ONE OF DEEP PESSIMISM AND DESPERATION. WE ALSO HEAR THAT PUBLICITY IN U.S. ABOUT PEASANT MARCH TO ERITREA, ALONG WITH USG GUIDANCE STATEMENTS THAT WE HAVE PASSED TO MOFA, MAY HAVE SHAKEN SOME EXTREMISTS, AND/OR STRENGTHENED HAND OF SOME MODERATES. HOWEVER, THESE REMINDERS OF USG VIEWS, AND IMPLICATION THAT USG MIGHT REACT, HAVE NOT YET PRODUCED STAND-DOWN ON MILITARY PREPARATIONS.

5. STRONGLY URGE ONCE AGAIN THAT DIRECT STATEMENT BE MADE IN WRITING OF CHAIRMAN OF DIRG, PREFERABLY COMBINED WITH POINTED QUESTIONS ABOUT EPMG INTENTIONS BOTH IN ERITREA AND IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. QUESTIONS WOULD BE DESIGNED TO ENHANCE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING AUTHORITATIVE EPMG VIEWS AND OPEN DIALOGUE WE NOW LACK.

6. DEPT SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER ASKING FRIENDLY ARABS (SAUDIS, EGYPTIANS, SUDANESE) TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE ON ELF/PLF TO OPEN  
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DIALOGUE WITH EPMG, AT LEAST TO TEST EPMG INTENTIONS, ALSO HOPEFULLY SEE IF EPMG'S NEGOTIATING OFFERS IN PRIVATE ARE MORE FORTHCOMING THAN PUBLIC ONES, AND TO FORESTALL EPMG MILITARY ACTION THAT IS LIKELY TO INTENSIFY IF NEGOTIATIONS DO NOT BEGIN.  
HUMMEL UNQTE ROBINSON

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